

SUBJECT: <b>Vehicle Operations</b>	NUMBER: 2-5.01
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## **I. POLICY**

The Department's vehicles are essential to an effective law enforcement operation. Carefully selected and maintained vehicles have a positive effect on operations in general and individual deputy performance in particular. Emphasis is placed on preventative maintenance, prompt mechanical repair, application of safety standards and obtaining maximum utilization of the available fleet.

## **II. PATROL VEHICLES**

Each patrol unit is conspicuously marked and equipped with items to assist in routine daily occurrences. This may include, but not be limited to,

- A. first-aid kit
- B. recorder
- C. roll-a-tape
- D. fire extinguisher
- E. evidence collection materials
- F. Leather gear
- G. Body Armor
- H. radio
- I. traffic vests

Unmarked units will be used for traffic enforcement in the event that unusual circumstances arise. All unmarked vehicles which could be used for traffic enforcement will be equipped with siren, radio, and emergency lights.

## **III. SPECIAL PURPOSE VEHICLES**

A number of vehicles are owned and operated by the Valencia County Sheriff's Department which is designated for special purposes.

### **A. DWI Enforcement Trailer**

1. The use of this trailer is primarily intended for the purpose of DWI Enforcement in the form of Sobriety Checkpoints.

2. The trailer is equipped with all necessary equipment to conduct the Sobriety Checkpoint.
3. It is the responsibility of the supervisor assigned to the Sobriety Checkpoint to ensure the readiness of any equipment for the next checkpoint.
4. No special training is required for its use.

B. DWI Enforcement bus

1. The use of this bus is primarily intended for the purpose of DWI Enforcement in the form of Sobriety Checkpoints.
2. The bus is equipped with all necessary equipment to conduct the Sobriety Checkpoint.
3. It is the responsibility of the supervisor assigned to the Sobriety Checkpoint to ensure the readiness of any equipment for the next checkpoint.
4. No special training is required for its use.

C. Command Center

1. The use of this Command Center is primarily intended for the purpose of establishing a temporary Command Post at special event, emergency situations, or other activities as need by the Department.
2. The Command Center is equipped with necessary equipment to establish a temporary command post.
3. It is the responsibility of the supervisor retuning the Command Center to ensure the readiness of vehicle for the next operation.
4. Special training is necessary for operation of the electronic equipment.

D. Crime Scene Van

1. The use of this Crime Scene Van is primarily intended for the purpose of collection of evidence at crime scenes as needed by the Criminal Investigation Division.
2. The Crime Scene Van is equipped with necessary equipment to process and collect evidence.
3. It is the responsibility of the Evidence Technician and the Criminal Investigation supervisor to ensure the readiness of the Crime Scene Van for the next operation.

4. No special training is necessary for its use.

E. ATV's

1. The use of this ATV's is primarily intended for the purpose of patrol, searching of large unimproved or primitive areas, or other uses as needed by the Department.
2. The use of ATV's does require the operators to utilize proper safety equipment (i.e. helmet, safety glasses, boots).
3. It is the responsibility of the Fleet supervisor to ensure the readiness of the ATV's for the next operation.
4. Special training is required for their use.

F. SWAT vehicle (MRAP)

1. The use of this vehicle is primarily intended for the purpose of SWAT operation.
2. It is the responsibility of the SWAT Team Leader to ensure the readiness of this vehicle for the next operation.
3. Special training is required for its use.

#### **IV. OPERATION OF VEHICLES**

- A. When leaving a department vehicle parked unattended, employees shall lock the ignition and doors and retain the key on their person unless impossible or impractical because of duty requirements. The security of law enforcement equipment and confidential material in vehicles will be the responsibility of each individual deputy.
- B. Regardless of weather conditions, deputies shall roll up all windows in police units at the end of their tour of duty.
- C. Deputies should secure his/her vehicle while the engine is running. The only exceptions will be if the employee has to exit the vehicle in an emergency situation or on normal traffic violations.
- D. In the event a deputy moves equipment from one vehicle to another, it is his/her responsibility to replace the equipment or notify his/her supervisor of the change and reason.
- E. Only authorized personnel are permitted to operate department vehicles.

#### **V. USE OF SEAT BELTS**

While operating a vehicle, members of this department will use the installed seat belts. Circumstances may, however, occur in which deputy safety issues may outweigh the use of the seat belt (i.e. removing the seat belt just prior to arriving at the scene of an emergency call).

## **VI. INSPECTIONS**

- A. Deputies will be responsible for inspecting the interior of their assigned patrol units for contraband and weapons during the course of their shift. The vehicle will be inspected as follows:
  - 1. Before each shift
  - 2. Immediately before and after transporting person(s) or prisoner(s);
- B. Any contraband or weapon(s) found during the inspection prior to starting the shift will be reported to the deputy's supervisor as soon as possible.
- C. Shift Supervisors will conduct monthly inspections of vehicles utilized by their subordinates. This inspection will be completed no later than the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month. Random inspection may be done at any time by supervisors as needed, or at the orders of the Sheriff. The Vehicle inspection sheet form VCSO109 will be forwarded thru the chain of command to the Administrative supervisor.
- D. Any deputy using a pool car will complete an inspection on that vehicle when signing it out. The Vehicle inspection sheet will be forwarded to the Administrative supervisor.
- E. Vehicle inspection forms, VCSO109, will be maintained by the Fleet supervisor for one year.

## **VII. MAINTENANCE**

- A. Sheriff's Department employees assigned a unit will be responsible for the following:
  - 1. Cleanliness of the interior and exterior of the vehicle
  - 2. Regular maintenance is maintained on his/her assigned department vehicle.
  - 3. Deputies will be responsible for insuring the overall appearance of their assigned vehicle and will insure this by arranging such washing or other cleaning as is necessary.
- B. Members of this department will be restricted from:
  - 1. Making anything but minor adjustments on any vehicle;
  - 2. Altering the body, general design or appearance of any vehicle;
  - 3. Any equipment or addition shall require permission from the Sheriff;

4. Making any repairs or having any repairs made to the vehicle other than at a Garage, unless emergency circumstances exist;
  5. Using fuel, oil, lubricant, or other liquid additives in the vehicles other than those issued at, or authorized by, the department.
- C. Willful acts or negligence on the part of employees in the care or operation of vehicles or failure to follow the established policies governing the use of vehicles will be cause for disciplinary action.
  - D. When a department vehicle is in need of service or repair, the requesting employee will complete a work order with detailed information describing what deficiency was observed or what service is needed.
  - E. The Vehicle Maintenance history will be kept by the County Road Department. If any questions arise as to the maintenance history of any fleet vehicle.

#### **VIII. PATROL SHIFT ASSIGNMENTS**

- A. The Valencia County Sheriff's Department will provide continuous patrol coverage during shift changes. Shift times may change at the discretion of the Sheriff. Deputies work 12 hours shifts; day shift is from 0700 to 1900 hours and night shift is from 1900 hours to 0700 hours.
- B. Shift assignments are done in accordance with the current Union Contract.

#### **IX. VEHICLE ASSIGNMENTS**

- A. Individual Vehicle Assignments – Take Home Units

The Department has established a policy of assigning take home vehicles to the following positions:

1. All deputies will be assigned a take home unit.
  2. Deputies can be assigned any vehicle in the fleet at the discretion of the Sheriff or his designee.
- B. Deputies with an assigned vehicle which is registered under a name other than the County of Valencia are responsible to ensure that the registration is updated. In the month prior to the annual registration renewal, the deputy shall bring the registration to the Fleet supervisor who in turn will complete the appropriate paperwork.

#### **X. USE OF ASSIGNED SHERIFF'S VEHICLES**

- A. Assigned vehicle may be maintained at the assigned deputy's primary residence. The

vehicle should be parked in a location as to minimize the possibility of damage to the vehicle.

- B. Assigned vehicles may be driven for any duty assignment. They may only be driven off duty to attend court, department sponsored training, department meetings or while conducting any legitimate department business, or during off duty usage as described below.
- C. In the event of a shortage of vehicles, for on duty use, the supervisor has the discretion to obtain needed vehicles from deputies who are off duty and in possession of an assigned unit. The supervisor will attempt to make arrangements with the deputy(s) prior to obtaining the vehicle.
- D. A spare key shall be maintained by the fleet supervisor for any issued vehicle.
- E. On duty deputies, unless otherwise authorized, must wear the uniform required by that duty and have all required equipment available in the vehicle. This includes but is not limited to badge, body armor, handcuffs, and authorized handgun.
- F. Department vehicles will not be run idle unless the vehicle overhead lights are on.
- G. Deputies are not allowed to transport anyone other than a Valencia County Employee while in an on duty status unless given permission by the Sheriff or his designee.
- H. If a deputy is going to be on any type of leave for a long period the assigned take home vehicle must be turned in and left at the Sheriff's Department. Once the deputy returns to work, a vehicle will be reassigned to them.

#### **XI. VALID NEW MEXICO DRIVERS LICENSE**

- A. All members of the Department who operate a Department vehicle shall have in their possession at all times a valid New Mexico Driver's License.
- B. If a member has their driving privileges revoked or suspended, they are responsible for contacting their immediate supervisor.
- C. To ensure compliance with insurance standards, each employee who operates a Department vehicle is subjected to a DMV record check at any time.

#### **XII. CODE RESPONSE**

- A. Code 1
  - 1. When responding to a non-emergency call, operation of the vehicle will be with no emergency lights or sirens in operation and within the posted speed limits.

2. Unless assigned, dispatched or requested to respond to a call, all patrol units will remain on patrol in their assigned area. This is not to discourage response of additional units for back-up, if necessary with appropriate information given to dispatch.
3. Supervisors may respond to any call at any time, and are encouraged to do so and provide guidance and assistance when required.
4. Unless exigent circumstances exist, any other member of this department operating a department vehicle shall abide by the state statutes.

**B. Code 2**

1. Certain conditions may exist where deputies need to only utilize emergency lights, Code 2 operation.
2. Deputy may operate their vehicle Code 2:
  - a) While conducting a funeral escort; or
  - b) While conducting a traffic stop;
  - c) While stopped in the street for some reason, such as investigating an crash, assisting a stalled vehicle or conducting traffic control; or
  - d) When the deputy reasonably believes that use of Code 2 is justified.

**C. Code 3**

1. The purpose of emergency equipment on patrol vehicles is to allow the vehicle to proceed through traffic at a reasonable rate of speed with a minimum risk to lives and property by warning other motorists.
2. When driving under emergency conditions, deputies of this department will conform to the rules of safe driving and maintain control of the emergency vehicle at all times.
3. In emergency conditions, when the posted speed limit must be exceeded. Deputies will utilize emergency lights and siren, Code 3 operation. The posted speed limit may be exceeded within reason, keeping in mind the inherent dangers.
4. Deputies may operate their vehicle Code 3:
  - a) upon a call for 'deputy needs assistance'; or
  - b) when human life is known to be in danger (such as a crash with injuries)
5. A deputy may be the subject of disciplinary action if it is determined that he/she failed to use reasonableness and disregarded established traffic laws.

**XIII. DEPUTY'S RESPONSE TO CALL**

- A. Upon arrival at the scene of a call, the responding deputy shall rapidly evaluate the situation and determine whether additional units are still needed or whether other units responding can be slowed or cancelled.
- B. All units responding to robbery and/or burglary-in-progress calls, before coming within hearing distance, shall discontinue the use of the siren and at that time fully comply with all traffic laws. Before coming within sight of the location, deputies shall discontinue the use of the emergency warning lights.

Deputies are reminded that upon deactivation of a siren or flashing lights, their response ceases to be an emergency one and they must comply with all posted speeds and traffic control devices.

- C. In situations requiring a silent response, e.g., alarms and prowler calls, deputies shall respond as rapidly as possible, obeying all traffic laws and signs.
- D. Deputy-initiated response.

When, in the opinion of the deputy, an emergency is imminent or exists, or that activation of emergency warning devices is necessary to protect life or render the necessary service, the department authorizes an emergency response.

Examples include:

1. Any incident where the use of emergency lights constitutes a necessary warning for the safety of life (such as scenes of fires, accidents or disasters).
  2. As a visual signal to attract the attention of motorists stopped for traffic violations, or to warn motorists of imminent dangers.
  3. Responding to a non-Code 3, where the deputy has previous or additional information which would have resulted in the call being dispatched as Code 3.
  4. Where because of location, distance to be traveled, or traffic conditions, the deputy determines that emergency operating conditions are essential in order to provide an appropriate response.
  5. In response to an deputy's emergency request for assistance.
  6. For pursuit.
- E. Use of emergency warning devices in non-emergencies
    1. Deputies shall activate emergency equipment to notify drivers that they must stop and to provide a safe environment for the driver, deputy, and the public.



2. Deputies may activate emergency equipment in non-emergencies when expediency is required to eliminate a potential hazard to the public or other deputies, such as using emergency lights to protect disabled motorists or when department vehicles are used as protective barriers.